



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

1828 L Street NW, Suite 802 • Washington, DC • 20036

Phone: (202) 223-1240 • Fax: (202) 296-8082

Email: dc@jacl.org

PRESS RELEASE

JENA SIX: UNFAIR AND UNEQUAL TREATMENT

CONTACT: Floyd Mori, (202) 223-1240
dc@jacl.org

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) expressed concern today over the apparent unequal treatment of six youth from Jena, La., known as the “Jena Six.”

Thousands converged in Jena Thursday to show support for the six black students charged with the beating of a white student. The six students were originally charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder last year, though some of the charges were later reduced. The only member of the group to be tried thus far, Mychal Bell, remains in custody even though his conviction was overturned.

The JACL’s National Youth Student Council, which represents the voice of JACL members under the age of 25, declared the issues surrounding Jena Six of particular relevance, as it involves clear violations of civil rights with regard to race and youth in a school setting.

“As student and youth representatives of the JACL, we empathize with the black students in Jena as we have also been the target of discrimination and racism on school playgrounds and inside classrooms. We hope that this incident sheds light on the critical state of race and youth in our society,” said Brandon Mita, a representative from the Youth Student Council and law student at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

The JACL did not condone the violence, but instead expressed its disappointment with the way the case has been handled by school officials, local law enforcement and the Louisiana judicial process.

“Equal treatment and fairness under the law remains the critical concern of the JACL,” said National Director Floyd Mori. “The Jena Six case is troubling and has overtones of the Vincent Chin incident where the victims have more reason for concern than the perpetrators of hate.”

The Japanese American Citizens League, established in 1929, is the oldest Asian American civil rights organization in the United States. Our mission is to secure and maintain the human and civil rights of Americans of Japanese ancestry and others victimized by injustice. For more information, contact S. Floyd Mori at dc@jacl.org. To contact the JACL National Youth Student Council, e-mail Kimberly Shintaku at youthchair@jacl.org.